

HUMAN RESOURCES FOR TREATING NEW CANCER CASES IN SRI LANKA

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to describe the human resources needed in Sri Lanka to treat new cancer patients.

The population of Sri Lanka is approximately 20.06 million (9.89 million men and 10.17 million women) and the estimated number of new cancer cases in Sri Lanka for the year 2008, based on Globocan data for Sri Lanka as a whole (<http://globocan.iarc.fr/>) was 24447 (11041 in men and 13406 in women) (Table A). The five most common cancers in Sri Lanka are (1) head and neck (lip and oral cavity, nasopharynx, other pharynx, larynx and thyroid), (2) breast, (3) gynecological (cervix uteri, corpus uteri and ovary), (4) hematological malignancies (Hodgkin lymphoma, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, multiple myeloma, leukemia) and (5) esophagus.

Table A: The ten most frequently occurring cancers in Sri Lanka for men and women based on 2008 Globocan data (<http://globocan.iarc.fr/>).

Cancer	Both	Rank	Men	Rank	Women	Rank
All cancers excl. non-melanoma skin cancer	24447		11041		13406	
Head & neck	5198	1	3306	1	1892	3
Breast	3436	2	0		3436	1
Gynecological	2936	3	0		2936	2
Hematological Malignancies	2773	4	1544	2	1229	4
Esophagus	1942	5	936	5	1006	5
Lung	1567	6	1250	3	317	7
Colorectal	1463	7	774	6	689	6
Urological	1155	8	1031	4	124	9
Brain, nervous system	587	9	326	7	261	8
Stomach	393	10	281	8	112	10
Liver	348	11	239	9	109	11
Pancreas	140	12	83	10	57	13

Newly diagnosed cancer patients need pathology, surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy. The number of oncologists needed is based, therefore, on the number of patients requiring pathology, surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy (Table B). This number is estimated from the percentage of patients requiring surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy for the top ten cancers in both men and women. For developing countries the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) recommends training radiation/clinical oncologists who can prescribe both radiation and chemotherapy for the common solid cancers, instead of separate medical and radiation oncologists. Hematological malignancies are treated primarily by hematologist-oncologists. The number of specialists needed is based upon the number of cancer patients but each city, in order to ensure coverage if one person leaves or goes on vacation, must have at least 2 surgical oncologists, 2 radiation/clinical oncologists, 2 hematologist oncologists, etc.

Table B: Number of oncologists needed for Sri Lanka's two most populous districts based on 2012 population estimates (<http://citypopulation.de/>) and 2008 Globocan data for new cancer cases (<http://globocan.iarc.fr/>).

	New Cancer Cases	Hematologist Oncologists	Surgical Oncologists	Radiation / Clinical Oncologists	Urologic Oncologists	Gynecologic Oncologists	Neuro-Oncologists	Pathologists
Colombo	2833	2 [†]	4	15	2 [†]	2 [†]	2 [†]	6
Gampaha	2802	2 [†]	4	15	2 [†]	2 [†]	2 [†]	6

[†]At least 2 are needed in each city.

In addition to oncologists, support staff such as onco-pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, oncology nurses and palliative care specialists is also needed. Many cancer patients require hospitalization for diagnosis, treatment and/or complications, therefore an adequate number of oncology beds will be needed. The number of oncology nurses, onco-pharmacists and pharmacy technicians needed is based upon the number of beds occupied daily by cancer patients while the number of palliative care specialists is based on the number of new cancer cases per year (Table C). The oncology nursing staff for each 24-bed oncology unit (operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) comprises of one head nurse and a nurse specialist as well as 13 nurses working 8 hour shifts, 5 days per week.

Table C: Number of oncology Units, oncology nursing and pharmacy staff needed for Sri Lanka's two most populous districts based on 2012 population estimates (<http://citypopulation.de/>) and 2008 Globocan data for new cancer cases (<http://globocan.iarc.fr/>).

	New Cancer Cases	Oncology Beds/Day	24 bed Oncology Wards	Onco-Pharmacists	Pharmacy Technicians	Palliative Care Specialists	Oncology Ward Nurses
Colombo	2833	55	3	12	18	6	45
Gampaha	2802	55	3	12	18	6	45

†At least 2 are needed in each city.

Since many cancer patients require radiotherapy, appropriately equipped facilities will be needed along with radiation oncology staff (Tables D and E). Radiation oncology staff includes radiation therapy technicians, medical physicists, Linac engineers and radiation oncology nurses in addition to radiation/clinical oncologists. The minimum radiation therapy equipment requirements are at least one of each: Linac, brachytherapy unit, CT simulator, treatment planning computer and dosimetry/quality assurance package.

Table D: Radiation Therapy Staff needed for Sri Lanka's two most populous districts based on 2012 population estimates (<http://citypopulation.de/>) and 2008 Globocan data for new cancer cases (<http://globocan.iarc.fr/>).

	New Cancer Cases	Radiation / Clinical Oncologists	Radiation Therapy Technicians	Medical Physicists	Linac Engineers	Radiation Oncology Nurses
Colombo	2833	15	22	8	2	8
Gampaha	2802	15	22	8	2	8

Table E: Radiation Therapy Equipment needed for Sri Lanka's two most populous districts based on 2012 population estimates (<http://citypopulation.de/>) and 2008 Globocan data for new cancer cases (<http://globocan.iarc.fr/>).

	New Cancer Cases	Linac / Co 60 Megavolt Unit	Brachytherapy Units	CT Simulators	Treatment Planning Computers	Dosimetry /QA Packages
Colombo	2833	4	2	2	2	2
Gampaha	2802	4	2	2	2	2

NOTE: Guidelines from the IAEA of the United Nations were used to calculate the radiation therapy equipment and staff needed in the setting of a developing Sri Lanka. Guidelines from the Oncology Nursing Society were used to calculate the number of nurses needed. Several other specialty societies were also requested to provide guidelines but in most cases there were none, therefore colleagues active in those fields were consulted for estimating the number of staff needed.